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ABSTRACT

Cooperation, sharing, and competence are the key ideas in the Victorian Country Education Project, a pilot project to be conducted in a limited number of rural areas in Australia in an effort to overcome problems peculiar to rural schools and communities and to search for new ways to provide those schools and communities with improved educational experiences at reasonable cost. The Project's basic philosophy is that all schools and local communities within a given area should cooperate in the development and implementation of programs which will allow the sharing of local resources and competencies to meet the area's assessed needs. Development of country programs should occur in two stages. Stage I includes selection of an area Project Committee and coordinator, and assessment of area needs and resources. Stage II includes development of area programs based on prioritized needs, submission of the programs to the Planning Committee, implementation, and resources control. Careful evaluation of the process and programs, which will be the basis for future strategies for rural education and will develop local skills, should be conducted continuously by the Project Committee and outside parties (if desired). The booklet contains guidelines for the preparation of program submissions and for program evaluations. (SB)

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VICTORIAN
COUNTRY
EDUCATION
PROJECT

Proposal and Evaluation Guidelines

1977

Re 011324

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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SECTION	TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
1.00	SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES	1
2.00	INTRODUCTION	2
3.00	PHILOSOPHY OF PROJECT	3
4.00	DEVELOPING A (SUBMISSION) PROPOSAL	6
	4.10 DESIGNATED AREA	6
	4.20 COUNTRY PROJECT COMMITTEES	6
	4.21 FORMATION	6
	4.22 COMPOSITION	6
	4.23 EX - OFFICIO MEMBERS	7
	4.24 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS	7
	4.30 PROJECT CO - ORDINATORS	7
	4.40 PROGRAM EVALUATION	8
5.00	SUMMARY OF STEPS TO DEVELOP SUBMISSION	9
6.00	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	10
	6.10 PREAMBLE	10
	6.11 FORMAT OF SUBMISSION	10
	6.12 STAGE 1. PROGRAM CONTEXT	11
	6.13 STAGE 11. PROGRAM (SUBMISSION) DEVELOPMENT	12
	6.14 STAGE 111. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION	13
7.00	PROGRAM EVALUATION (It has three stages as in Program Development)	14
8.00	PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS	23

1.00 SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES

The Victorian Country Education Project is a pilot project, which is funded by the Schools Commission, but administered by an inter-systemic Planning Committee through a full time Executive Officer.

As a pilot project it will be conducted in a limited number of rural areas. The basic guidelines for the program are that all schools (state and non-state) and local communities, within an area, should co-operate in the development of programs which will allow the sharing of local and project resources to meet the assessed needs of its schools and communities.

The development of programs will be in two stages. In the first stage

1. Each area will elect a Project Committee to oversee the project in its area.
2. The Project Committee will elect or appoint a full time co-ordinator who will liaise with the Executive Officer and aid the Project Committee in implementing the project in the area. (see Section 4.30)
3. Each Project Committee, through its co-ordinator, will compile a comprehensive record of the needs and resources of schools and communities in its area.

In the second stage

1. Each Committee should establish a priority of needs and from them, develop programs which will utilise local and project resources, which can be requested from the Planning Committee.
2. Each Project Committee will then be responsible for implementing the approved programs and controlling whatever resources are allocated by the Planning Committee.

At the same time as Stage 1 and 11 are being developed, the Project Committee will be responsible for the careful evaluation (see Section 7) of each stage.

It must be remembered that this is a pilot project and as such, the evaluation of programs across the State will be the basis on which future strategies for rural education will be developed and this should be of great benefit to all rural communities.

2.00 INTRODUCTION

This year the Australian Schools Commission has taken a new initiative by providing separate funds for use in Country areas.

In Victoria this pilot program is identified as the Country Education Project which is to be administered by a Planning Committee through a full time Executive Officer.

As a pilot project it will be applied to a limited number of country areas and whilst it is seen as a means of overcoming problems peculiar to rural schools and communities it will, in particular, search for new patterns of providing improved educational experiences, at a reasonable cost, to country schools and communities.

This booklet sets out:

a. the philosophy behind the project,
b. guidelines for the preparation of program submissions,
c. guidelines for the evaluation of programs,
d. suggestions for programs.

3.00 PHILOSOPHY OF PROJECT

The Australian Schools Commission has provided funds for this project because it was seen that country schools and communities face particular problems as a result of:

a. isolation between
   - schools and regional centres and capital cities,
   - rural communities,

b. limited specialist resources,

c. the small size of schools,

d. problems peculiar to the rural economy.

In addition, the isolation of schools and rural communities often results in pressures which lead to the duplication of resources, and this unfortunately benefits the larger centralised schools. Furthermore isolation deters inter-school and community co-operation which, if present, could result in a greater awareness and more equitable use of resources within an area.

By relating the A.S.C.'s themes of equality of opportunity, openness and participation, the real essence of this program can be seen.

The significance of the themes can be seen from the following extracts:

Equality and Openness and Participation

> "The Commission continues to be concerned that the ability of people to take advantage of the educational opportunities present in the society is so strongly constrained by family, social and cultural background. It regards equality of opportunity, which makes those chances independent of background, as an important goal. For this reason it supports the provision of 'second chance' education on a more generous basis, positive discrimination in schooling in favour of children of less advantaged background, and attempts to involve families in the development of and support for suitable schooling for their children."
> (Schools Commission Report, July 1976, P. 8, Section 2.5)

"(The Commission) supports moves to pass progressively wider decision-making powers to the school community of teachers, parents and students..... Parents have long been excluded from any significant educational role in the school. The immediate problem is to encourage them into the school on terms which convey their right and capacity to participate in framing its educational program and to assist teachers to enter into a new kind of relationship with parents." (S.C. Report, July 1976, P. 13, Section 2.23)

"The development of greater local control whereby all teachers participate in forming school policies along with students, parents and other community members may appear to heighten tension, but in general this tension is in fact already present; existing arrangements merely conceal it. Parents, teachers and students often have very different educational philosophies and goals, however inarticulate they may be about them. Dialogue which encourages all parties to articulate a rationale for particular approaches is important in the development of awareness of educational issues and in coming to terms with divergent positions."
(S.C. Report, July 1976, P. 13, Section 2.25)

Given the above information the Commission has stressed two points. Firstly, it considers that the most effective use of the Project's limited resources will be achieved by the sharing of all resources within the community, that is, those resources that already exist and those that may be introduced. Also, because of the complex nature of rural problems and the desirability of including the wider community in the decision-making process, it is seen as necessary that local communities participate in the defining of their problems and the proposing of possible solutions.

Added to this, the Planning Committee wants the programs to focus on "Co-operative Competence", that is, to discover the skills, competences, abilities actually possessed by children, teachers, parents and other community members so that they can be built on and shared. Rather than starting with weaknesses it wants to start with strengths, with competence rather than incompetence, with advantages rather than disadvantages.

Thus the themes of this project are embodied in the words CO-OPERATION, SHARING AND COMPETENCE

- The CO-OPERATION between all school communities in an area, and that means Government, non-Government, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary.
- The SHARING of all resources between all school communities.
- The SHARING of the decision-making process.
- Concentration on the COMPETENCES that communities and individuals possess.

Given the above commitments it is obvious that the Planning Committee views education in a very broad sense. The school is not seen as the only educating agency; it is seen as one amongst many agencies which are bringing information and resources to a community. Thus when committees start to develop programs they must not see the schools as the only place where the program will take place. Nor should it see curriculum simply as a school-based, teacher-directed enterprise. Program Committees are urged to cast their nets wide and to feel confident that the Planning Committee will provide encouragement and material support to the development of programs which meet the themes of the Project.

4.00 DEVELOPING A SUBMISSION

4.10 Designated area.

The areas for the project were selected by the Planning Committee on the basis that -

a. they contained a number of Government and non-Government, Primary and Secondary schools.

b. the schools and communities in the areas had the potential to interact with each other.

c. the areas faced problems of a geographic and socio-economic nature, which are peculiar to the rural environment.

4.20 Country Project Committees

4.21 Formation

The committees must be formed through public meetings which are open to all members of the public.
Also the meeting must be organised in conjunction with the Project's Executive Officer who will contact community leaders and groups to help arrange meeting times and transport details.

4.22 Composition

The committee must

a. be democratically elected

b. have an elected Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer

c. have procedures as to who will be responsible for any funds granted by the Planning Committee.

Whilst the composition of the Country Project Committee will largely be left to the meeting, because of the nature of the project it is recommended that each committee contain

a. one member from the Catholic Education Office

b. one member from the State Education Administration

c. at least fifty per cent non-teacher membership (i.e. parents, farmers, businessmen or any other interested community people)

d. School personnel including Principals, teachers and senior pupils.

The Country Project Committee will also have the power to develop ad hoc sub-structures for specific purposes, but

at all times these sub-structures will be responsible to the Project Committee in that area.

4.23 Ex- Officio Members

The Executive Officer and the Project Co-ordinator (see 4.30) are to be ex-officio members of the Committee. As well, the Committee may co-opt other support personnel whom it feels could help in the development and preparation of programs. These could include Department representatives, businessmen etc.

4.24 Committee Functions

The function of the Committee will be to

a. identify the resources in the project area.
b. make an assessment of the needs of the community.
c. develop submissions to be considered by the Planning Committee.
d. implement programs which are approved by the Planning Committee.
e. control funds given by the Planning Committee in connection with the Project
f. aid in the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the project and programs.

All the above functions are treated in detail in section 6.0 which deals with the detailed presentation of proposals.

4.30 Country Project Co-ordinators

Any Project Co-ordinator should have a sound knowledge of and a personal relationship with people and groups in the local communities. His/her function will be to

a. assist in the identification of resources and needs of the area (see Sec. 6.12)
b. assist in the preparation and assessment of submissions.
c. keep the Executive Officer fully informed of all developments in the area.
d. keep records of meetings, copies of which will be forwarded to the Executive Officer.
e. keep comprehensive records of how the project was developed, what problems arose and how they were overcome. This should include information about

i) how and with whom contacts were made in the community

ii) which groups and/or individuals interacted the best.

iii) which groups and/or individuals resisted and their reasons for doing so.

Given the crucial nature of this position it seems necessary that an interim Project Co-ordinator be appointed before the contacts and meetings are started. As this is only an interim appointment, the person will function up to the holding of the Public Meeting, at which time, the elected Country Project Committee may appoint a full time Project Co-ordinator.

4.40 Program Evaluation

(See Section 7.00)

This is seen as a key aspect of the project, because as a pilot project, the evaluation feedback will provide the guidelines for the development of future strategies for education planning in rural areas. Evaluation must be continuous to allow -

a. desirable changes to a program to be made as it is in progress.

b. successful strategies to be reported to the Planning Committee and so made available to other areas.

Because of its importance the Planning Committee considers evaluation should be carried out in two forms.

Firstly, the Country Project Committee, along with any professional people it decides to co-opt, should continuously monitor the program. This will provide continuous feedback to the Planning Committee and allow for changes to the program as it develops. But what is more important it will develop skills and information which will be retained at the local level for future use.

At the same time, because it is a pilot project, the Planning Committee may nominate an outside group to make a continuous overview of all projects as they are developing. This group would have the responsibility of reporting their findings to the Country Project Committee and through this interaction, reports and recommendations will be made to the Planning Committee. //

5.00 SUMMARY OF STEPS TO DEVELOP SUBMISSION

This will take place in three stages.

Stage 1. Program Context

a. Area designated by Planning Committee.
b. Contact with local community.
c. Public Meetings to form Country Project Committee.
d. Appointment of Country Project Co-ordinator.
e. Identification and development of local resources booklet/register/record.
f. Identification of needs of the community in relation to the project.

Stage 2. Submission Development

a. Development of priorities, goals and objectives.
b. Development of submissions based on goals, local needs and local resources.

Stage 3. Implementation

a. Implementation of program.
b. Evaluation of program.

6.00 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

6.10 Preamble

The major themes of this project, namely SHARING, CO-OPERATION, AND COMPETENCE, should be reflected in each program. In view of this the project's philosophy, (Section 3) should be re-read before work begins on the proposals.

All proposals must contain sections on the program and the evaluation procedures. Both sections will be developed at the same time, but in three different stages. This process is outlined in the diagram below.

STAGE	PROGRAM	EVALUATION
I	Program Context (Section 6.12)	Development of a) records b) resource information (Section 7)
II	Program Development - Inputs a) personnel b) resources (Section 6.13)	Development of a) priorities b) goals/objectives c) resources - materials - personnel (Section 7)
III	Implementation of Program (Section 6.14)	Evaluation of Program outcome (Section 7)

6.11 Format for Submitted Proposal

Sufficient copies (20) of the submission should be prepared to allow each member of the Assessment Panel (Planning Committee) to study it for at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.

Main Summary Page

A. Area Information

A1. Names of Schools

A2. School Numbers

A3. Addresses.

A4. Phone Numbers.

A5. Principals.

A6. Enrolment.

A7. Date of Preparation.

B. Other Grants

B1. Previous Grants from Supplementary Grants Program. (Provide brief description and amounts)

B2. Grants from other funding agencies. (Provide brief description and amounts)

B3. Provide description of how they are integrated into submission.

C. Country Project Committee

C1. List of members of Country Project Committee including some information about each member, eg. Mr. A. - Music Teacher, Mrs. B. - Parent, Member of School Council, Mr. B. - Local Farmer.

C2. Name of Country Project Committee Chairperson.

D. Projects Proposed

E. Evaluation Procedures

6.12 Stage I Program Context

The Planning Committee sees this stage as crucial to the whole program and because of this it will provide separate funds to ensure its success.

It will involve the

a. initial contact with community leaders and departmental representatives.

b. organisation of public meetings.

c. formation of a Country Project Committee.

d. selection of a Country Project Co-ordinator.

e. identification of resources within the community (see Evaluation Stage 1)

f. identification of the community's needs.

g. development of a resources booklet or file.

6.13 Stage II Program (Proposal) Development

Based on the resources and needs outlined in Stage 1 the Country Project Committee should

a. outline its priorities

b. select those goals and objectives which it feels it could achieve in the short and long term.

Around these, the Committee should develop proposals which can be considered for funding by the Planning Committee. (See Section 8 - Suggestions for Submissions and Program Development)

The program must provide details about the inputs that will be needed, and as such should include details about

a. Personnel Utilisation
   - local community involvement
   - local teachers
   - specialists
     - education
     - agriculture
     - welfare, etc.
   - outside specialists
     - universities
     - colleges
     - business
     - special educational services, etc.

b. Resource Utilisation
   - local resources
     - mothers' clubs
     - volunteer organisations
     - local businesses
     - outside materials (This should include a budget)

c. Project Approaches to be Employed

These would involve any activity which

a. the community identifies as a need,

b. creates a greater utilisation of community resources,

c. creates a greater interaction of community groups and people.

Once again the Planning Committee emphasises that Projects should not be seen only as school-based, teacher-directed activities. (See Section 8, Suggestions for Programs)

6.14 Stage III Program Implementation

This will involve putting into effect the programs which have

7.00 PROGRAM EVALUATION

This will be the responsibility of the Country Project Committee along with any outside personnel it wishes to co-opt. Also it will be carried out in three stages in conjunction with program development.

7.10 Stage I Evaluation

This will include the preparation of records and a resource booklet (or other form of presentation decided upon).

7.11 Records of Formation

a. Community Contacts

- who made the contacts with the community in the area?
- how were names collected?
- those who were contacted.
- how the contacts were made.
- the types of responses that were received.

b. Area Meetings

- when and where held.
- who made the decision to hold it at that place? how publicized?
- who was asked to the meeting?
- who attended?
- reasons given for those not attending.
- transport and accommodation arrangements made.
- who conducted the meeting?
- how conducted
  - formal/informal
  - discussion/lecture

c. Country Project Committee

- how formed
- membership
- constitution

7.12 Resource Identification

This should be extremely comprehensive and contain information for wide dissemination and future use about

a. Useful Personnel in the Area

(i) Professionals
- graduates
- accountants
- technicians
- tradesmen
- typist/receptionists
- policemen.

(ii) Special Interest Groups/Clubs
- theatre
- film
- ham radio
- bush walkers
- art/craft
- unions
- cookery
- glider clubs etc.
- senior citizens

(iii) Plus people who have any skills of any other kind.

(iv) Volunteer Groups
- Apex/Rotary/Lions
- church organisations
- mothers' clubs
- child minding groups

(v) Businessmen or Community leaders who have been or are active in community affairs.

(vi) Government Department Personnel
- Local Government Councils
- Agriculture
- Education
- Welfare
- Radio/T.V. etc.

b. Physical Resources in the Area

(i) Schools / Colleges from State and Church systems

(ii) Recreation centres

- halls (Church/Local Govt/State Organisations)
- theatres
- camp sites
- pools

(iii) Bus companies

(iv) Bargain centres for school materials.

c. Finance

(i) Fund raising activities.

(ii) Expenditures by volunteer organisations

(iii) Finance available through other Govt. Grants to schools

(iv) Estimate of parental expenditure on activities such as

- swimming lessons
- excursions
- camps

7.13 Storage of Resource Information

The method by which this material is stored for publication and wider use will be left entirely to the Country Project Committee. It could take the form of one or more of the following.

a. A card index system.

b. A resource booklet.

c. A newspaper / letter.

d. Regular Radio broadcasts.

e. Local T.V. news items.

7.14 Needs Assessment

i. Who were the people who made the assessment?

ii. How were the needs of the area assessed?
- questionnaire?
- interviews?
- public meetings?

iii. Which groups and/or individuals in the community were consulted?
- parents?
- students?
- teachers?
- farmers?
- businessmen?
- other?

iv. What types of needs were considered?
- economic?
- social?
- educational?
- geographical?
- others?

v. Give a complete list of the needs put forward by individuals and groups in the area.

7.15 Stage II Program Development Evaluation

This section will involve the determining of priorities, the setting of goals and objectives and the resources needed for the program.

a. Priorities

i. What procedures were used to determine priorities?

ii. Make a complete list of all the suggestions that were put forward for the program development.

iii. Explain why other suggestions were rejected.

b. Program Goals and Objectives

i. How were the goals decided upon and by whom?

ii. What specific area of need/s do they relate to?

iii. Is there a plan for the systematic revision of these objectives?

c. **Resources**

i. Educational courses.

a. Were present existing educational courses examined in the development of programs?

b. What other factors were considered in relation to educational course area for the development of programs
- research findings
- outside advice - from whom -
- experiences of other schools
- the needs assessment?

c. Do programs as funded reinforce educational courses that already exist or do they move in new areas?

If existing courses are to be changed, will they be changed quickly or gradually?

ii. Outside Personnel

a. Specialists.

1. Were the following experts considered for liaison within program development?

Curriculum and Research _____
AVEC _____
District Inspectors _____
Migrant Education Branch _____
Regional Consultants _____
Agriculture _____
Welfare _____
Health _____
Businessmen _____
Farmers _____

2. Specify which experts were actually involved in program development.

3. How were their services utilised?
e.g. staff meetings, in-service days, etc.

4. How much advice given by these experts was eventually incorporated into program design?

b. Community.

1. Were the following community groups considered for involvement in the initial planning of programs?

   Parents ____
   Ethnic Groups ____
   Local Government ____
   Lay groups/religious schools in area ____
   Police, Social Welfare etc. ____
   Churches ____
   Volunteer and Service Groups ____

2. Were they actually involved in the initial planning? If yes, specify which groups.
3. Have they actually been involved in any on-going planning? If yes, specify which groups.
4. How have they been involved in initial or on-going planning?
5. What positive contributions were made by these groups to program planning?

iii. Equipment

a. Will any equipment already present in the area be more widely shared?
b. Has any school offered to share its equipment?
c. What sharing arrangements have been reached?
d. What new equipment will be needed for the project?
e. How will it be purchased?
   - project funds?
   - donations?
   - mothers' clubs?
f. How many alternatives were considered for financing the purchase of equipment?

iv. In-Service Courses

a. Have any in-service programs been used in the development of the program?

b. Who has been involved in the in-service program?

c. Have they been effective?

d. Will in-service courses be a continuing part of the total program?

v. Other

a. Who are the people who have been nominated to implement the program?

b. Outline the procedures to be used in the implementation.

c. Who are the people who have been nominated to monitor and evaluate the program? (It is necessary that they keep accurate records of their work.)

d. What procedures and techniques will be used in evaluation?

-- interviews?

-- tests?

-- observations?

-- attitude tests and rating scales?

-- others?

e. What are the criteria against which the success or failure of the program will be judged?

7.16 Stage III Program Evaluation

Accurate evaluation in this stage is crucial because from the data the Planning Committee will have to:

a. consider changes to the program

b. develop strategies for future programs.

Because of this the Committee needs a comprehensive set of subjective and quantitative data.

These data should come from:

teachers,
students,
parents,
community groups,
outside consultants,
both State and Church Education systems.

a. Inter - System Co-operation

i. Which State/Non-State schools are co-operating in the area?

ii. In what ways are they co-operating?
- sharing resources (which resources?)
- program exchange
- teacher exchange
- social interaction.

iii. Are any State/Non-State schools not co-operating? Give reasons.

iv. Outline steps taken to obtain co-operation between State/Non-State schools in the area.

b. Group Attitudes

i. Did any of the above groups have any expectations from the program?
What were they?

ii. Have these expectations been achieved?

iii. How was this measured?

iv. If their expectations were not achieved, what reasons (subjective/objective) did they give?

v. Would the evaluating group like to make any comments on any observed changes in group attitudes?

vi. Have the groups participated in the way it was planned?

c. Changes

i. Information

1. Have any of the groups gained greater access to information? This would include school records, finance, policy, departmental correspondence, knowledge about the designated areas.
2. Which groups?
3. What information?
4. How has this affected their attitudes and performance?

ii. Decision-Making

1. Have any of the groups increased their participation in the decision-making process?
2. Which groups?
3. What processes?
4. How has this affected their attitudes and performance?

iii. Resources

1. Have any of the groups increased their control over resources?
2. Which groups?
3. What resources?
4. How has this affected their attitudes and performance?

d. Other

i. Who are the people who have been nominated to implement the program?

ii. Outline the procedures to be used in the implementation.

iii. Who are the people who have been nominated to monitor and evaluate the program? (It is necessary that they keep accurate records of their work.)

iv. What procedures and techniques will be used in evaluation?
   -- interviews?
   -- tests?
   -- observations?
   -- attitude tests and rating scales?
   -- others?

v. What are the criteria against which the success or failure of the program will be judged?

8.00 PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

Essentially, all programs should reflect the expressed needs of the schools and communities and, to some degree, the use of local resources. As such it is difficult, if not wrong, to suggest programs at the outset.

What would be desirable is that when Project Committees are considering suggestions or submissions they should keep the following features of the program clearly in mind -

1. It is a PILOT PROJECT which is searching for new ways of bringing educational experience to rural communities.
2. The basic guidelines are
    a) CO-OPERATION between all school communities in the project area.
    b) SHARING of the decision-making process and resources that exist or may be introduced into the community.
    c) LINKING community resources and needs together in program formation.
    d) COMPETENCE, that is a concentration on the strengths and abilities that a community possesses.
    e) EVALUATION. That adequate provision is given to evaluating the program.

Given the very broad nature of this project the Planning Committee fully expects a wide variety of programs and suggestions to surface which may -

a) need project resources.
b) use local or alternate resources.
c) remain undeveloped ideas.

As a priority the Planning Committee will direct resources towards programs that meet the guidelines and for which there is no alternate source of finance.

At the same time the Planning Committee would appreciate being notified of all new programs or initiatives which are using local or alternate resources. The information from these programs will be of great value in developing strategies for future rural education.

Finally, many ideas will surface but not be developed, possibly because resources seemed unavailable or there was lack of time to develop them. The Planning Committee would welcome advice of such ideas, because as it is co-operating with several Government Departments and Local Government Councils on this project, it may be able, through these different agencies, to find resources to further develop the ideas.

The above does not provide concrete suggestions for programs and to some degree this has been a conscious decision by the Planning Committee. At the same time Project Committees may be assured that any requests of this nature will be met by the Planning Committee.

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